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Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 IO-13 ISO-00 HA-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02
SS-15 ICA-11 /086 W
----------002930 181930Z /46
R 171511Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1321
INFO USMISSION GENEVA
AMEMBASSY MANAGUA
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

C O N F I D E N T I A L GUATEMALA 4805

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, SHUM, PINR, GT
SUBJ: INSCRIPTION OF NEW POLITICAL PARTIES IN GUATEMALA

SUMMARY. ALEJANDRO MALDONADO AGUIRRE, WHO LEFT THE MLN LAST YEAR TO SEEK HIS POLITICAL FORTUNE ELSEWHERE, TELLS ME THE WAY IS ALMOST CLEAR FOR THE INSCRIPTION OF HIS NEW POLITICAL PARTY, AND, HE ASSUMES, THE SUBSEQUENT INSCRIPTION OF THREE MORE. HE GIVES PRESIDENT LUCAS PRIMARY CREDIT FOR THIS "TOUGH DECISION," AND POSTULATES APPEARANCE OF EIGHT PARTIES IN THE 1982 ELECTIONS, THE PROSPECT OF WHICH, HE BELIEVES, WILL HELP REDUCE POLITICAL TENSION HERE. END SUMMARY.

1. MALDONADO AGUIRRE, WHO SOUGHT UNSUCCESSFULLY LAST YEAR TO BECOME A PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE AND WHO HAS JUST BEEN NAMED GUATEMALA'S AMBASSADOR TO THE INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN GENEVA, TOLD ME IN A CONVERSATION AUGUST 14 THAT HE IS CONFIDENT THAT HIS NEW PARTY, PARTIDO NACIONALISTA RENOVADOR, WILL BE INSCRIBED IN THE VERY NEAR FUTURE. HE SAYS HE EXPECTS TO LEAVE ABOUT AUGUST 31 TO TAKE UP HIS NEW POST IN GENEVA, BUT WILL NOT

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LEAVE UNTIL HAS PARTY HAS BEEN INSCRIBED. HE SAID HE WAS ALMOST CERTAIN THAT THE ELECTORAL REGISTRY HAD COMPLETED ITS ACTION ON INSCRIPTION AND THAT THE ONLY REMAINING BAR WAS THE CLEARANCE OF THE DEFENSE MINISTRY. AS HE FELT SURE THAT MINISTRY WOULD NOT WISH TO BE SEEN INTERFERING IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS, HE BELIEVED THE BATTLE WAS VIRTUALLY WON.

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2. HE SAID THE GOVERNMENT HAD TO DEAL WITH THE INSCRIPTION OF THE APPLICANT PARTIES IN ORDER AND THAT HIS PARTY'S INSCRIPTION WOULD BE FOLLOWED BY INSCRIPTION OF PERALTA AZURDIA'S PARTY, THEN GENERAL ARANA'S, AND POSSIBLY COLOM ARGUETA'S. ALTHOUGH HE SEEMED LESS SURE IN ANSWER TO A DIRECT QUESTION ABOUT THE CERTAINTY OF COLOM ARGUETA'S INSCRIPTION, HE CONSISTENTLY REFERRED LATER IN THE CONVERSATION TO THE "EIGHT PARTIES" WHICH WOULD FIGURE IN THE 1982 ELECTIONS. THE ONLY THING THAT COULD STILL UPSET THE APPLE CART, HE THOUGHT, WOULD BE A STATE OF SIEGE, WHICH WOULD REQUIRE A FREEZING OF THE POLITICAL STATUS QUO. HE WAS THEREFORE WATCHING THE CURRENT STRIKE ACTIVITY WITH KEEN INTEREST, HE SAID.

3. HE SAID PRESIDENT LUCAS DESERVED GREAT CREDIT FOR THIS PROSPECTIVE ACTION. HE SAID IT WAS A HARD DECISION IN THE FACE OF PRESSURE FROM MANY OF THE PEOPLE AROUND LUCAS, BUT LUCAS HAD TAKEN IT, "KEEPING HIS WORD." BUT INSCRIPTION WOULD ALSO PAY DIVIDENDS AS IT WOULD EASE TENSION HERE, SUGGESTING TO POLITICALLY-MINDED PEOPLE THAT "THEY WERE PASSENGERS ON A VOYAGE OF TRANSITION" TO A MORE OPEN SYSTEM IN WHICH THEY COULD COUNT, FOR EXAMPLE, ON BACKING CIVILIAN CANDIDATES IN THE 1982 ELECTIONS.

4. IT MIGHT SEEM UNDESIRABLE ON THE FACE OF IT, HE SAID, TO HAVE EIGHT PARTIES BUT THESE EIGHT WOULD IN FACT SORT THEMSELVES INTO ALLIANCES SO THAT AS FEW AS THREE BASIC CHOICES WOULD BE CONFIDENTIAL

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PRESENTED TO THE VOTERS IN 1982, REPRESENTING THE LEFT, CENTER, AND RIGHT. HE SAID HIS PARTY WOULD BE CENTRIST, COMPETING IN THE SPECTRUM WITH THE PID AND PR. THE MLN WOULD BE ON THE RIGHT, COLOM ARGUETA'S PARTY WOULD BE ON THE LEFT, AND THE REST WOULD SEEK THE CENTER. HE THOUGHT THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS, RATHER THAN ALLY THEMSELVES WITH COLOM, WOULD MOVE TOWARD THE CENTER.

5. COL. PERALTA AZURDIA WAS PRESSING FOR THE FORMATION OF HIS NEW PARTY, THE FUN, BECAUSE HE WAS DEEPLY DISILLUSIONED WITH THE MLN LEADERS WHO, MALDONADO SAID, HAD SHOWN WHEN THE CHIPS WERE DOWN THAT THEY WERE MORE INTERESTED IN STRIKING DEALS WITH LUCAS FOR CONGRESSIONAL SEATS THAN IN FIGHTING FOR PERALTA AZURDIA'S VICTORY IN THE ELECTION HE WAS CONVINCED HE HAD WON.

6. AS FOR HIS PERSONAL PLANS, MALDONADO TOLD ME THAT HE WAS LOOKING FORWARD TO HIS TOUR IN GENEVA BUT WOULD RESIGN AFTER TWO YEARS TO RETURN TO GUATEMALA, OBVIOUSLY TO BEGIN WORK ON HIS PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN FOR 1982.
BOSTER

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